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ABSTRACT

A school administrator is influenced by the roles and expectations of the school, the school district, and the clientele, as much as the school is influenced by his personal style as administrator. This notion necessitates a reexamination of the so-called administrative leadership tradition which presumes that the power, authority, and influence of principals provide the major sources of thrust and significance to the educational enterprise. The training of future principals, those who can contribute applicable expertise to the total system rather than perpetuate existing traditions, will require a different set of assumptions and perspectives on the part of training institutions. The training of administrators is still primarily an apprenticeship of folklore. (Author/DE)

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CONCEPTUALIZING PRINCIPAL BEHAVIOR IN THE SCHOOL CLIMATE: A SYSTEMS ANALYSIS

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School principals are enveloped in the predicament of their condition as members of complex organizations. They are so much in and of the stream of events that it is difficult for them to achieve perspective of the patterns underlying the events. This condition renders them subject to conditions where decision-making may well be out-of-tune in the ensemble of organizational effectiveness.

The bases upon which prevailing administrative practices take place are predominantly idiosyncratic. The relationship of these practices to organizational effectiveness may be fortuitously significant. On the other hand, the general lack of clearly perceived alternatives makes ineffective decisions almost equally likely. The perception of alternatives in organizational life is facilitated by the assumption that all organizational occurrences can be thought of as occurring in a system of interdependent forces, each of which can be analyzed and set in the perspective of other forces. This notion of "system" makes it possible to examine such complex organizational phenomena as principal behavior in the school climate.

Social Systems Theory

The rapid evolution of social systems theory proceeded after Pareto, Merton, and Homans with the appearance of Parsons' venture into theory building in The Social System. The society is viewed as a

system of interaction. The relationship between the members represent its structure. Parsons speaks of the functional prerequisites of social systems and suggests that these prerequisites include: (1) meeting the needs of individuals, (2) control over disruptive behavior, and (3) maintenance of cultural resources.[1] Following in the sociological tradition of Pareto, Merton, Homans and Parsons, Getzels[2] presented a model of social behavior which elaborates Parsonian social system theory.

The school represents a social system within which teachers and principals interact as organizational members. In this sense schools direct their efforts toward the attainment of goals, and, in the words of Parsons, "contribute to a major function of a more comprehensive system, the society."[3] Bidwell[4] lends credence to this point of view as he discussed the first classic sociological study of the school, Waller's The Sociology of Teaching. In Waller's analysis the school is not just a formal organization, but a social system or small society.

Social systems theory, and specifically, the social system model represents the theoretical framework from which one can derive a conceptualization of the climate of a school and the behavioral characteristics of principals.

Organizational Climate

Lonsdale wrote of organizational climate:

> Indeed, organizational climate might be defined as the global assessment of the interaction between the task-achievement dimension and the needs-satisfaction dimension within the organization, or in other words, of the extent of the task-needs integration.[5]

Lonsdale uses the terms task-achievement dimension and need-satisfaction dimension synonymously with the terms nomothetic (institution) and idiographic, (individual) respectively.

From the point of view of role theory every individual in the social system occupies a position that carries with it certain norms for behavior. They carry out their duties in a rational hierarchy of subordinate-superordinate interactions. As organizational members encounter each other in the performance of their roles the setting usually elaborates the need for reciprocal adaptations to the others' behavior. Organizational roles are, therefore, complimentary.

Conceptually, organizational climate is that state of the organization which results from the interaction that takes place between organizational members as they fulfill their prescribed roles while satisfying their individual needs. Guba illustrates this concept in operation as he writes about the task of the administrator:

> The unique task of the administrator can now be understood as that of mediating between two sets of behavior-eliciting forces, that is, the nomothetic and the idiographic, so as to produce behavior which is at once organizationally useful as well as individually satisfying.[6]

The concept of organizational climate can be operationalized to refer to the resulting condition within the school from the social interaction between the teachers and the principal.

Principal Behavior

Principal behavior within the conceptual framework of the social system is that which results as the principal delegate attempts to cope

with an environment made up of expectations for his behavior (roles) in ways consistent with his own individual pattern of needs (personality). In the process of actualizing his personality through the expectations of his role, the principal exchanges his behavior for rewards.

Barnard[7] felt that one of the essential elements of organizations is the willingness of members to contribute their efforts to the system. This contribution is predicated upon an exchange wherein each member, in this case the principal, has more than one course of behavior open to him. The reciprocal nature of intraorganizational social behavior has a significant effect upon the interaction variables that make up the organizational climate. In this regard as the principal contributes his behavior to the organization for rewards, he is at the same time influenced by it.

The social system model elaborates personality as need-disposition. Getzels defines the need-dispositions as the central analytic units of personality. Moreover, Parsons and Shils define need-dispositions as "individual tendencies to orient and act with respect to objects in certain manners and to expect certain consequences of these actions."[8] Parsons and Shils go on to suggest that each concrete need-disposition involves a combination of values. Values are those aspects of the member's orientation which commit him to norms, standards, and expectations when he is in a situation requiring him to make a choice. On this basis a principal's value orientations will guide him to his choices whenever he is forced to choose among various goal objects and which need-disposition he will gratify. Furthermore, the value orientations which commit him to the observance of certain rules and behaviors are

not random, but tend to form a system of value orientations which commit him to some organized set of rules. Culturally, the organized set of rules are system values to which the member is committed through his own personal values which are elaborated as need-dispositions. It is with these considerations in mind that the behavioral characteristics of principals are considered as outgrowths of his role, values, and orientations.

The Principal in the School Climate

The history of the role of the principal illustrates shifts in emphasis from the strict custodial orientation in the Taylor era to the occasional laissez faire practices of the 1930's in the name of human relations. In this regard the shifts in the manner of viewing the influence of the principal over the school and the school over the principal have varied throughout the history of public education. The interest of this inquiry is focused on the relationship of principal behavior and school climate in the present era of public education. Specifically, the interest is in an analysis of principal behavior and school climate in the conceptual social system of the school.

Although Getzels does not speak directly to the subject of the socialization of organizational behavior, he does state that the organization establishes what he calls "imperative functions that are to be carried out in certain routinized patterns."[9] Parsons[10] on the other hand observes the organizational forces built about the processes of maintenance of equilibrium. The social system maintains the stability of its interactive processes by balancing motivations toward deviant behavior with motivation toward organizational restoration,

e.g., the school climate once established will tend to prevail over forces to change it. Furthermore, Parsons cites the processes of socialization as fundamental to the maintenance of equilibrium within the social system in that it is the means whereby the members acquire necessary orientations to the performance of their roles and integration of their personalities.

Merton asked the question over a decade ago to which one aspect of this inquiry addresses itself; "To what extent are particular personality types selected and modified by the various bureaucracies?"[11] Effective principal behavior in this regard is dependent upon the role, the principal's concept of his role, the need-dispositions of his personality, and the expectations of the group.

Following Merton's question, Presthus[12] presented an analysis and a theory of the organizational society. A basic assumption upon which he based his analysis is that social values and the climate of the social system mold individual personalities through the process of socialization. The principal can expect to find that his behavior is largely subject to the control of the school climate. The school as an organization represents the source of the assumptions that the principal forms about his identity. Lipham[13] and Halpin[14] discovered similar evidence that principals tend to pattern their leader style to a role construed for them by the school and the school district as did Charters[15] in a study of teacher socialization.

In referring to schools Bridges posited several assumptions about the socializing influences of large formal organizations, e.g.,

> ...sustained role-enactment in a bureaucracy should lead to reduction in behavioral variation among organizational members

> occupying the same role. Role performance should be characterized by uniformity rather than diversity with perspectives, outlook, and behavior shaped more and more by institutional position and less and less by personality in the course of service within a given bureaucratic role.[16]

In a discussion of the characteristics of bureaucracy and how they influence behavior, Bridges goes on to say that as tasks are distributed among various positions as official duties, the principal performs most of the same occupational operations day in and day out. In fact, the longer he remains in the position the more the construed role remakes the man into its image.

The responsibility of the principal to the interests and demands of the school in relationship with the external environment is a component in the total system. Principals are motivated by the need for not only the internal approval of the school staff but also for external group approval from the larger school district and the school clientele. This intensifies the influence of experience. The influence of both internal and external demands upon the principal's behavior place him in a boundary or intersticial role. While his behavior is being intensely influenced by both internal and external sources, he finds himself frequently mediating between these two socializing forces.

The conceptual support cited leads to the assumption that organizational socialization takes place, and that the influence of internal and external organizational expectations prevails over the principal's personality characteristics as the length of their incumbency increases.

Through the socialization process the principal's personality becomes gradually dominated by the school expectations as the length

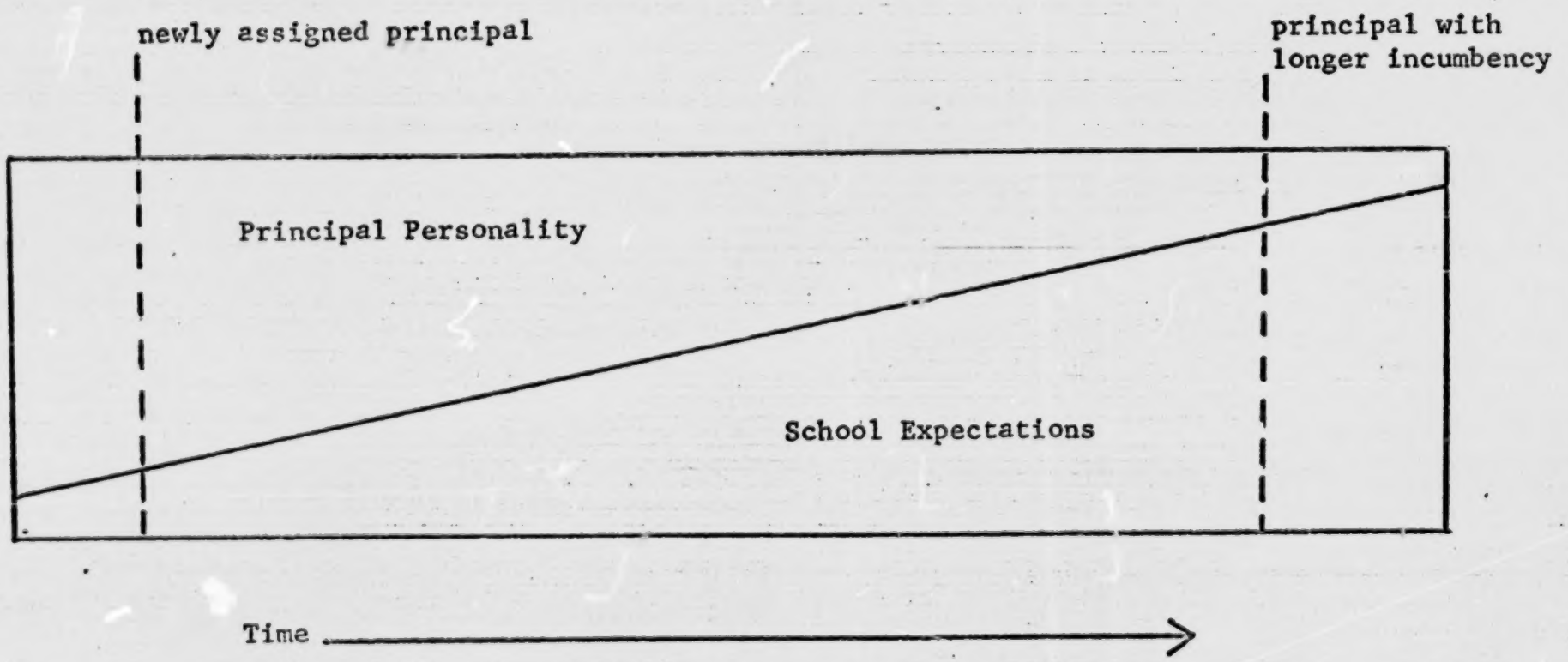
of time he is in the school increases (see Figure I).

Conclusions

The twentieth century popularity of social systems theory has begun to have an influence upon the manner in which students of educational administration view the functions of the executive. The school administrator functions in a social system wherein he is influenced by the roles and expectations of the school, the school district, and the clientele as much, if indeed not more, as he influences the school by means of his personal style as an administrator. This notion necessitates a re-examination of much of the tradition of so called administrative leadership which presumes that the power, authority, and influence of school principals provide the major source of thrust and significance to the educational enterprise. In the systems sense the principal is an interdependent force in a school, and his behavior is analyzable only in the perspective of other forces both external and internal which make-up the social system. Generalizations about principal behavior are justifiable only when relative to justifiable generalizations about the school and the community as a social system. The influence of experience within the system is enormous and tends to mold the principal's behavior. The implications of these assumptions for the training of school administrators are noteworthy. Success in educational administration is predicated upon the successful adaptation of the behavioral characteristics of administrators with existing organizational forces. Concepts of the principalship as essentially a role couched in the vagaries of "administrative leadership" and "instructional leadership" are questionable under the scrutiny of the

FIGURE I

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL EXPECTATIONS AND PRINCIPAL PERSONALITY IN OBSERVED BEHAVIOR



test of research. The modern school needs principals who can contribute applicable expertise to the total system and not merely perpetuate existing traditions. The training of these administrators will likely necessitate an entirely different set of assumptions and perspective on the part of training institutions. The infusion of the behavioral sciences in the field of educational administration is generally accepted conceptually, but yet rarely effectively operationalized. The training of administrators is still for the most part a apprenticeship of folklore which has been handed down from administrator to administrator. The environment and conditions of the school as a complex social system make up the medium from which administrative training programs could emerge which could enable schools to confront the demands of our enormously complex and dynamic modern condition.

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